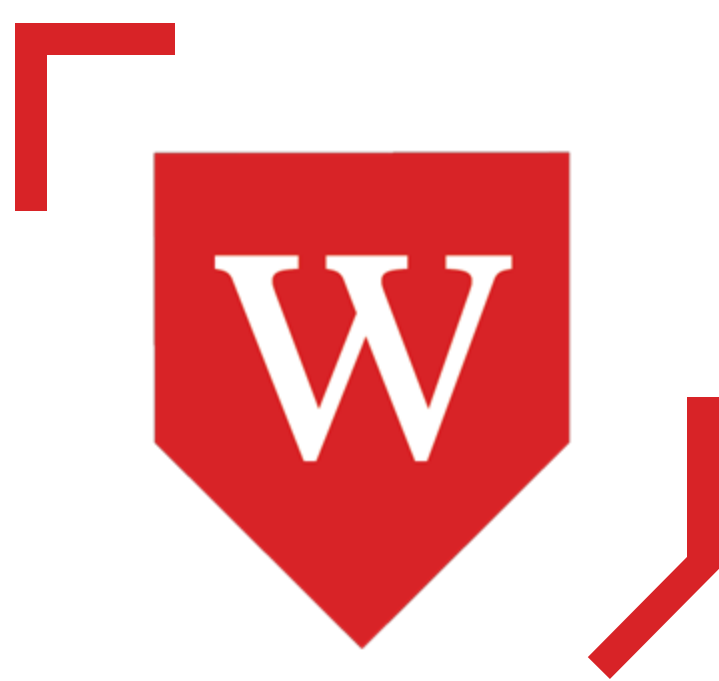




The Relationship Between Social Media and Political Participation



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Introduction

- Social Media is becoming increasingly relevant in politics as print media dies out and younger generations turn to social media, which may have more of an effect on their political views (Grundy, 2022; Ng, 2020; Pew Research, 2021; Hyun, 2015).
- Media consumption, especially in the context of social and online media, is generally positively correlated with political participation (Zhang, 2006; Neihouser, 2022).
- Generally, the use of social media does not affect political participation if it is used for leisure, but when it is used specifically for politics, it has been found to have an influence (Hyun, 2015). Levels of correlation with political engagement changes between social media websites (Halpern, 2017).
- Questions of statistical significance in these correlations have arisen, and there are few studies factoring general media use (Neihouser, 2022).

Research Questions

- Are Americans who are using social media more frequently more likely to participate in democracy by voting?
 - How does this relationship change when accounting for traditional forms of media consumption?
- response to how often they pay attention to politics in media, "yes" meaning at least somewhat closely.

Methods

Sample

- The sample represents the civilian, voting population of the United States. Participants were interviewed twice, one before the 2020 election, and one after. The sample included 8,280 pre-election and 7,449 post-election interviews.

Measures

- Participants were asked to list on a scale of 1 to 5 how often they posted political content on different social media websites. The general variable for political use of social media is measured by their maximum answer between those websites. Those who do not use social media were recorded as a 0.
- Participants were asked if they voted in different the House or presidential primary elections.
- The participants' traditional (television, print) media consumption is determined by their

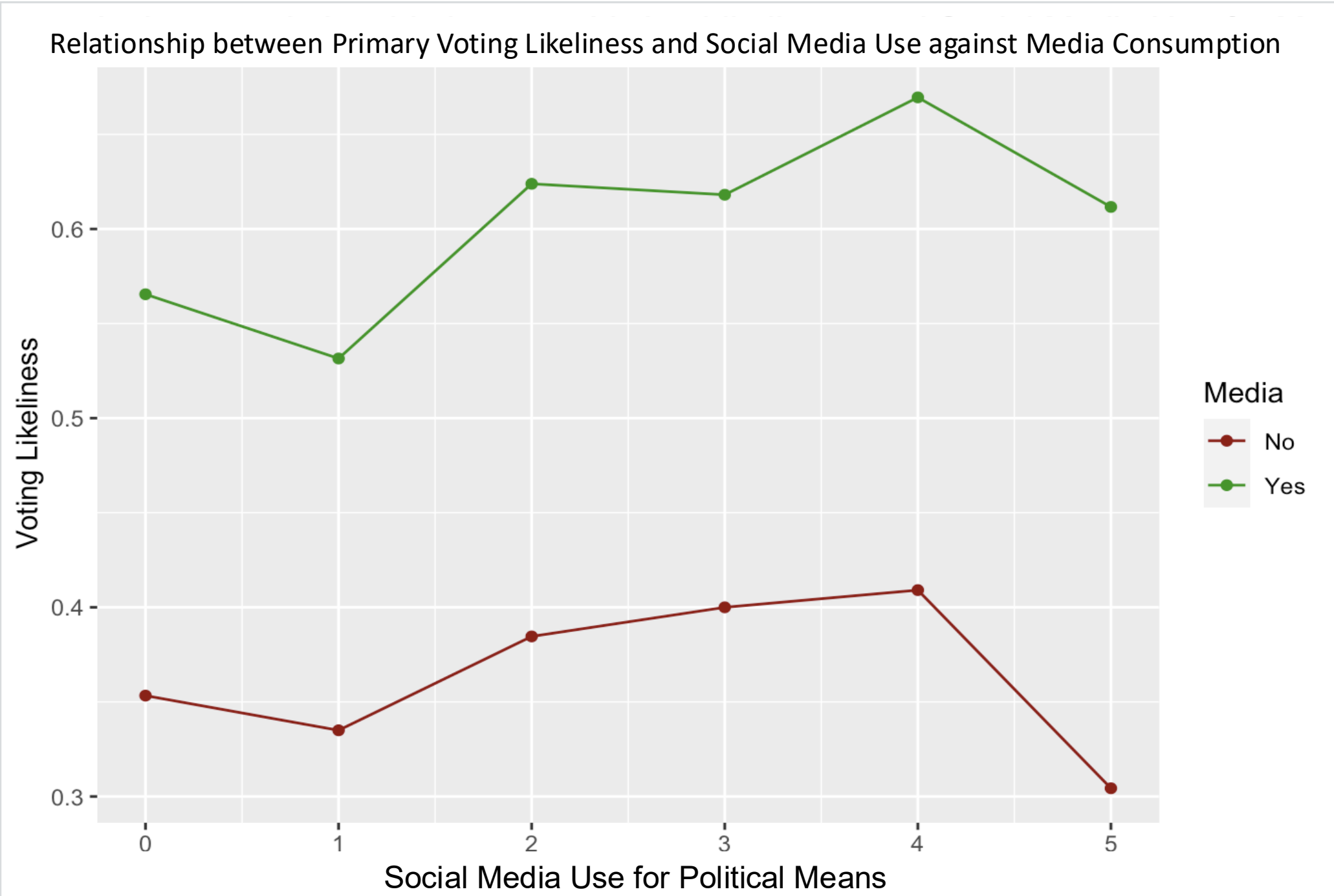
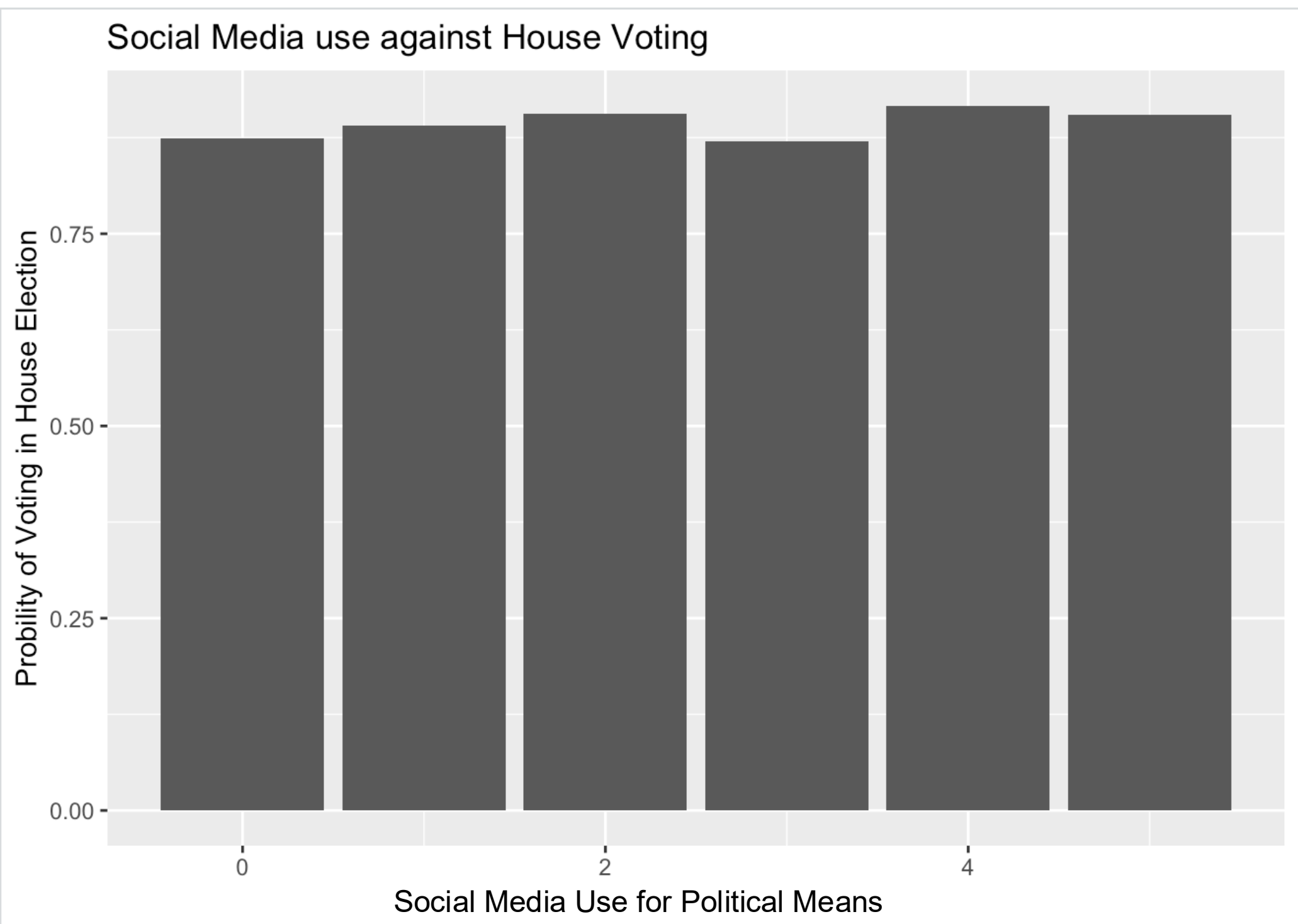
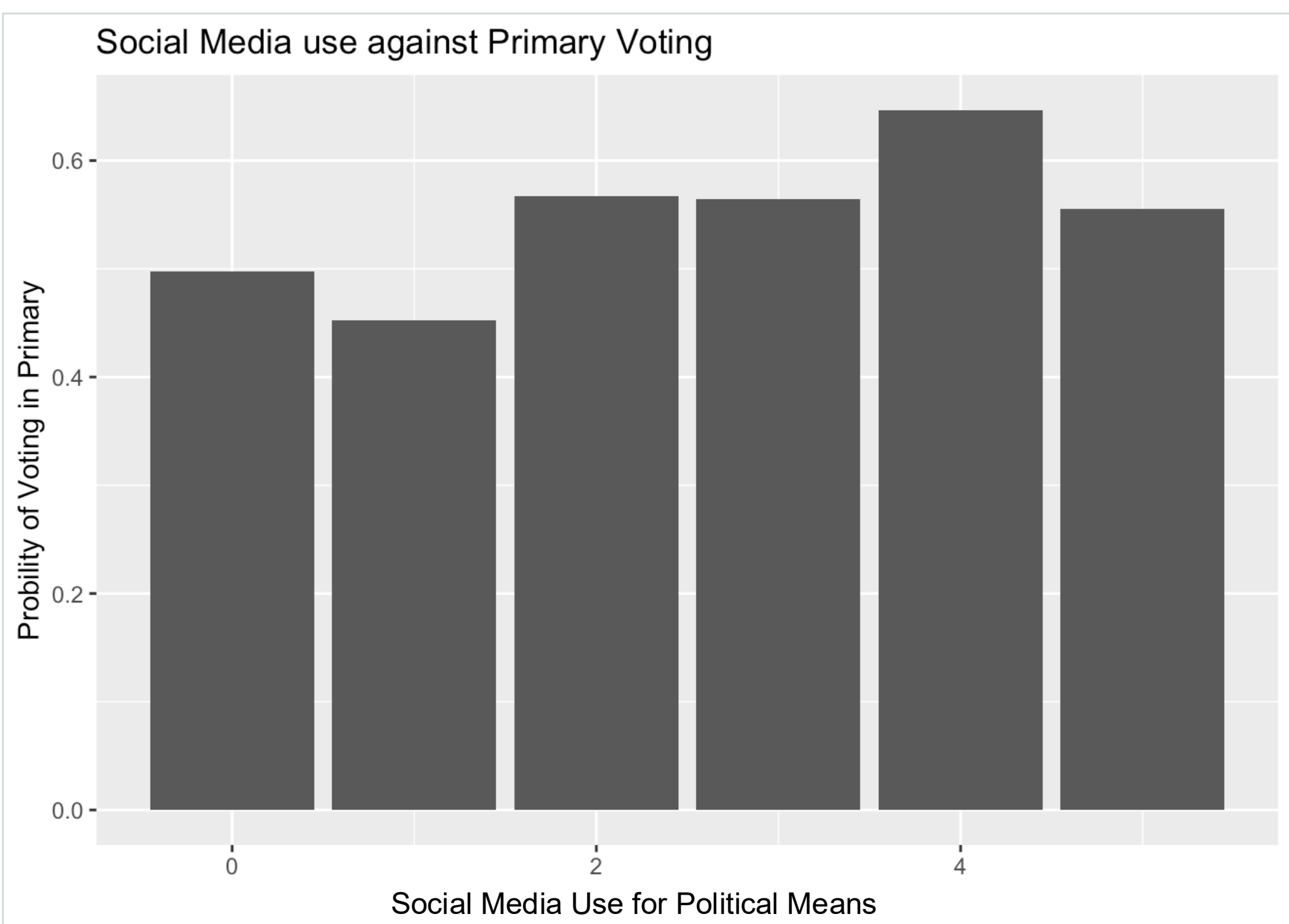
Results

Bivariate

- Pearson Correlation showed that social media use for politics (O.R. 0.885) is *not* significantly associated with the likelihood of one voting for the house of representatives
- However, there *is* a correlation between social media and presidential primary voting habits (O.R. 1.451, CI 1.286-1.643, $P < 0.001$).

Multivariate

- Social media use for politics (O.R. 1.314, CI 1.077-1.134, $p < 0.001$) is still significantly associated with the likelihood of voting in a presidential primary after controlling for if the participant consumes traditional forms of media for politics.
- Those with more social media use for politics have an expected odds of voting that is 1.3 times higher than those who do not while holding all other variables fixed, though those consuming traditional media are 2.9 times more likely.



Discussion

- There is not significant correlation between social media use and political participation in the form of voting, but there is correlation between engaging with politics on social media and primary presidential voting.
- Traditional media consumption appears to have a much greater correlation to primary voting.
- Future research is needed to determine if there is a causation between social media use and voting habits, and to analyze other covariates (such as strength of party affiliation)

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